Dancers Under Duress: The Forgotten Resistance of Fireflies

Laure Guilbert

"The dance of the fireflies, this moment of grace that resists the world of terror, is the most ephemeral, the most fragile thing that exists".
Georges Didi-Huberman, *Survivance des lucioles* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2009).

The "Unknown Dancer"

In the past years, I have undertaken many archival trips in Europe and to Australia, searching for traces of the life of the German-speaking dancers and choreographers who fled the Third Reich and occupied Europe. During that time, it became clear to me that much work also needs to be undertaken so that we might gain a deeper understanding of the tragedy: those dancers, choreographers and dance producers who were trapped in ghettos and deported to extermination camps. In this paper I outline several fields of reflection that have enabled me to begin tracing the plight of those artists caught up in Nazi totalitarianism.

Certainly not all escaped the eye of the storm, not the least being René Blum, director of the renowned Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, which he inherited upon the death of Serge Diaghilev. Like his brother Léon Blum, the former French Prime Minister of the "Front Populaire", René Blum refused to desert his country. He was captured in Paris in December 1941 in the very first round-up of French notables organized by the French and German police. He was transferred to the Nazi transit camp of Compiègne-Royallieu and then to the French transit camps of Pithiviers and Drancy, located near Paris. From Drancy, which was the main hub for Jews rounded up in occupied France, René Blum was deported in September 1942 to Auschwitz, where he was tortured and murdered not long after his arrival.

Then there is the tragic case of those who succeeded in escaping the Nazis more than once. The Latvian modern dancer, Tatjana Barbakoff (born Cilly Edelberg) was one. She had a successful career in Germany as an independent solo performer in cabarets and theaters. Many painters and sculptors portrayed her in her exotic Chinese and Russian stage costumes**.** She began her escape with her costume trunk under the pretext of a tour, arriving in Paris in 1933 with her companion, Gert H. Wollheim, painter of the Düsseldorf avant-garde. In May 1940, when the "enemy aliens" law (instigated after the German invasion in France by the Daladier government) was applied to foreign women, Tatjana Barbakoff had to spend several weeks in the Gurs internment camp in the Pyrénées. She was released after the Armistice of June 1940 and was able to hide during part of the war with her companion the help of a peasant woman near Lourdes in the so-called "Free Zone" governed by the Vichy Regime. But when she went to Nizza, looking for a safer place, she was captured in January 1944 by the Gestapo. She was sent to Drancy, deported from there to Auschwitz, and was gassed upon her arrival.

Apart from these tragic cases, which have been detailed by other researchers, I made a discovery that left me speechless while reading *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* by the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim from Vienna. In his book, Bettelheim analyzes the resources he managed to mobilize for surviving his own internment from 1938-1939 in the Dachau concentration camp near Munich, and Buchenwald, near Weimar. Bettelheim at one point describes an event that takes place in Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. He sets the scene at the entrance to a gas chamber, and describes a naked woman ordered to dance by an SS officer who had learned she was a dancer. Instead, as if dancing towards the man, she surprises him, seizing his gun and shooting him to death, before being killed herself by other SS officers. Bettelheim concludes his narrative considering that the dancer's reaction had been that of an individual who had recovered her free will in the last seconds of her life. This story had a profound effect upon me.

What stunned me? First of all, I could in no way conceive *a priori* that any danced movement could be expressed by an enslaved body in such a place. A dancer dancing in this site, representing the ultimate attack on humanity, seemed to be both derisory and miraculous. But especially, this narrative appeared to come out of a deep oblivion and to float outside of any defined historiographical landscape. How can one contextualize the singularity of this explosion of violence in the middle of Hell? It is, on the one hand, a desperate dance, condemned within the territorial and temporal abnormality of an extermination camp. And at the same time, it is a dance that represents an ultimate resistance, foiling both its Nazi oppressors and the Auschwitz system.

For Bettelheim this tragedy serves as a metaphor for his own reflection on survival, rather than being the subject of a detailed historical analysis of an event which happened in this specific place (Bettelheim gives no reference for his sources of this story). It would undeniably need to be crossed-referenced with other sources in order to understand the way this story has circulated in both oral transmission and written testimonies. But this first reading opened my own need to research this astonishing story and to look more deeply at dance in the camps. As particular as this episode first appears, it has rich significance and meaning in its general over-

view. The voice of the SS officer who gave the order to dance and the ensuing "contra-dance" by the condemned woman are symbols and expressions of two opposite worlds, each one carrying its own cultural systems of belonging: the world of the SS executioners and the world of the Jewish victims.

In this sense, the "archive of the body" at the heart of Bettelheim's description needs to be rescued from oblivion and re-connected to a global socio-political history of bodies under duress in the 20th century, a history that encompasses dancing bodies. Also, it is a history that chooses as its new center the naming of the forgotten victims and gives them back their rightful voice and place. It is not a matter of building a memorial, but of approaching the modes of writing about contemporary history with a critical outlook. The Israeli historian Kobi Kabalek also uses this approach, which takes a detour to unexplored margins of history and of historiography. As a specialist in the history of memory, he tells us: "Peripheral perspectives can introduce unusual ways of seeing our relationship with the past and of raising questions about the forms and functions of centers." With this perspective in mind, five fields of reflection emerge for future in-depth exploration.

1) The SS Worldview

The cross referencing of several testimonies of Auschwitz survivors and *"Sonderkommando"* survivors, as well as of SS officials of that camp, attest indeed to the tragedy described by Bettelheim. It took place on 23 October 1943, in the so-called "Sauna" (changing room of the "showers") of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Crematorium II, just after the arrival of a transport. The woman in question was Franciszka Mannova, who had been a talented and famous dancer on the Warsaw stage during the interwar years. The SS man was Sergeant Josef Schillinger, at his post in Auschwitz from October 1942. He was renowned for his cruelty, underlined during the Eichmann trial in 1961. Early accounts of the event describe the speed with which the news circulated in the camp, highlighting the hope that Franciska Mannova's reaction had inspired among the prisoners. The re-telling of the event made such a lasting impression on them that some will mention it in their post-war testimonies, even though they have not been direct witnesses to what had happened. But the sheer number and diversity of survivor narratives confirms that the dancer's murder took on a mythic status, irrespective of the actual facts surrounding the event. This process of transformation of reality also extends to Bettelheim's text itself. But rather than focusing in this article on this specific case, which deserves its own article, it is useful to re-connect this event to other forms of violence through dance perpetuated by the SS themselves in the camps. Effectively, the order given by this SS sergeant inserted itself in what one could call a "SS gesture". That is to say, a gesture that is an act of domination structured by the *NS-Weltanschauung* (National-Socialist worldview). Such a gesture, which gave the right to life or death over another, was embodied as a norm within the SS elite. Its epic vision showed who should be included or excluded from the new millennial Aryan Empire.

All over Nazi Europe, in ghettos, transit camps and concentration camps, forced labor and extermination camps, one finds scattered and tiny traces of various forms of humiliation and torture through body movement imposed on deportees, whether professional dancers or not. Depending on the functions assigned to each camp, these took, among others, the form of orders given to one or more inmates to dance during a "Nazi action" in front of a pit, or a gas chamber or also on the occasion of a visiting dignitary. Many extermination camps had their orchestra of inmates who were also, among others, forced to perform as their companions were being marched to their deaths. Singers were also required to perform. But, with the exception of the Westerbork transit camp located in the north of the Netherlands (which had an official cabaret troupe with dancers), it seems as if the forced dance practices have been more dependent on arbitrary decisions of the SS officers. However, through these persecutions meted out on the Jewish body (and also on the Roma body), the SS elite were proclaiming their supposed superiority – their status as *Kulturschaffender* (creators of culture) - whose self-appointed role was to create a "New Man" and to save the world from the "impurity" of the "sub-human". During these specific moments, the body of those who danced became the place of destruction of the so-considered Jewish *Gegenvolk* ("sub-human people"). Their bodies became the target and the place where the hatred of the persecutors inscribed itself.

Although practiced in the secret confines of the Reich, these assaults on the "impure" body can be mapped against the larger and older geography of anti-Semitic attacks. This would include the tradition of caricatures deriding the Jewish body, as well as the emergence of nationalist conceptions of art developed from the 19th century. Although not deterministic, this historical process found its most extreme form in the Nazi industrial production system based on the racial Aryan utopia, initiated by the political leaders of the Third Reich and conceived as a radical eugenic project of reshaping a whole population by the means of ideology and technology. In this way, while German artists were encouraged to create a so-called new Germanic art, German-Jewish artists, who had played a central role in the German cultural space, were excluded. This chain of violence, intertwining engaged art and racial exclusion, took place also in the choreographic world, at the hands of a majority of "Aryan" modern and ballet artists whose fame lingers today, including, among others, Rudolf von Laban, Harald Kreuztberg, Dorothée Günther (choreographic collaborator to the composer Carl Orff), Gret Palucca and Mary Wigman in Germany; Rosalia Chladek in Austria; or the Russian dancer Serge Lifar in France, director of the Paris Opera Ballet.

2) Dance as a Mode of Survival for the Deportees

A second field of reflection concerns the "body techniques" and the forms of creativity put into play by the deportees themselves in order to survive. The traces left in various forms by writers, musicians, actors and painters attest, as for dance, that artistic practices have been a mode of survival. The latter responded to several needs: the struggle for preserving one's identity as a person and to resist or circumvent the continuous humiliations, as well as the need for recreating moments of community.

Bettelheim explains that the "cleavage of personality" was an unavoidable way to survive this type of totalitarian society. In such a

society everything was done to rob the individual of one's dignity and disconnect the person from any symbolic activity or family roots and social life. Here, one must try at the same time to adjust to Nazi arbitrariness to preserve one's life, and to try to preserve a tiny space of inner life to keep one's integrity as a person. For some, as for the French Communist writer Charlotte Delbo, the "ruse" consisted of silently reciting poetry during roll call. For others, take the example of the modern dancer Helena Katz (the future Helen Lewis), from Trutnov in Bohemia, who was deported to the nearby ghetto of Theresienstadt, then to the extermination camps of Auschwitz and of Stutthof, near Danzig. She met the challenge in the way she cared for her body, trying to maintain a daily ritual of washing herself even with only a very small amount of water, despite the scarcity of water, the cold and her state of extreme exhaustion and starvation. These almost intangible gestures helped some to preserve their capacity to recoil against the perverse logic of the extermination camps. This is what the French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman calls "a slight tear in despair," in order to create "a place despite everything, a parcel of humanity" in which to retreat.

Other ruses were invented to try to bear and circumvent the strategies used by the SS men. Among these was a so-called "sport competition" at the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, near Berlin. Here the inmates were forced to perform an exhausting "Indian dance", with movements of crouching and of getting up, with incessant turns. At each rotation, the Polish antifascist musician and composer Aleksander Kulisiewicz fixed his gaze on the camp door in order to keep his balance. This improvised technique, close to the ballet technique of spotting or staring at a fixed spot during pirouettes, helped him to avoid the dizziness the SS guards were expecting.

Tatjana Barbakoff, 1927, photo: Wilhelm Willinger (private collection G.G.)

A third ruse consisted of skirting the incessant controls and the perverted and fragmented social relations purposely caused by a camp's daily work demands by reinventing small forms of dialogue and solidarity in the barracks before curfew. In her first testimony of 1946, Krystina Zywulska (who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and survived Auschwitz as a political prisoner, having hidden her Jewish identity), describes furtive exchange of readings, recitation of poems written by the prisoners, but also sometimes, for the religious holidays, brief dance or singing moments despite the prohibitions. They were often at the initiative of prisoners more resilient than others. Thus, the young Hungarian Judith Schischa-Halevy (the future Yehudit Arnon) offered movements and miming entertainments for her Auschwitz comrades by doing splits between the slabs used for beds, and pulling imaginary boats. The Hungarian Eva Fahidi-Pusztai, a lover of healing gymnastics since her youth, also described in her testimony the small shows and dance evenings she took part in with her fellow inmates *in Münchmühle,* a labor annex camp of Buchenwald, near Weimar.

These strategies also extended to helping imprisoned children. In the ghettos, it was usually forbidden to teach the children. Even though this was also the case in the Theresienstadt ghetto near Prague, from time to time children were taken by adult dancers onto the ramparts in order to secretly exercise and dance. It would be likely that Kamila Rosenbaumova, a dancer from Prague, would have been at the origin of this initiative. Helena Katz also was introduced to a group of dancers from the first day of her arrival. In Theresienstadt, the prisoners "benefited" from a particular self-administration that allowed them to develop various cultural and artistic activities. Rosenbaumova was able, for example, to choreograph two children's operas, *Broučci,* [The Little Boy Firefly Named Broučci] and *Brundibar* [the Wicked Barrel-Organ Player] which were performed a large number of times for prisoners between 1942 to 1945.

Another ruse lay in the SS command performances themselves. In the extermination camp of Stutthof, Helena Katz, on the verge of death, had been included in the preparation of an official show, at the initiative of an inmate who knew Helena Katz was a dancer. The show, supervised by SS guards, included theatre, music, songs and dances and was to be performed for the whole camp for Christmas. Being included in this type of activity made it possible for a while to escape the threat of the gas chambers. The inmates could even occasionally be excused from work during the duration of rehearsals, and would receive a slightly larger ration of food. At her first rehearsal, Helen Katz recognized the ballet music of *Coppélia*, in which she had danced in her former life. She choreographed a waltz helping her fellow performers who had been having trouble learning what to do to the music. At the end of the rehearsal, the prisoners were so impressed by her involvement that they asked her to dance for them. To her own surprise and despite her frozen feet, her body reacted instinctively to a South American musical piece played by an accordionist inmate and her improvised dance arose. The admiring circle of inmates suddenly formed around her, building up another kind of space despite the camp, a momentary space of a communal performing group united by the joy of dance and music. This unexpected moment had also the effect of protecting the group from the eyes of the SS woman guard.

In the same way, the Viennese Alma Rose, conductor and violinist at Auschwitz, said herself that she played with closed eyelids in official concerts refusing to look at the SS officers so as to avoid stirring up their hatred, expressed in their faces. The French-Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas has theorized this question. For him, the gaze and the visage symbolize humanity, and are a place where transcendence is concretized and revealed: "The encounter of the visage, the meeting of the eyes should be what prohibits the murder."

3) Poetics of Memory

A third field of reflection focuses on the forms taken by the poetics of memory in the post-Holocaust world of the second part of the 20th century. Here again, it is a question of linking the paths opened by the "survivor's dance" to those initiated by the other arts, in particular, the art of writing.

In *The Story of a Life*, the Romanian Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld, who experienced ghetto, camp and hidden life in Ukrainian forests, recalled the profound corporeality of memory, and the difficulty of associating words with the ebb and flow of traumatic memory. He wrote, "These images are sometimes as violent as a shot, then disappear as if they refused to be revealed…" For his part, Primo Levi wrote in his memoirs of the almost impossibility in which language found itself to express a reality that exceeded the limits of representation, "Reason, art, poetry do not help us to decipher the place from which they have been banished."

Yet, if writers struggled with the fallibility of words in expressing the destruction of humanity, other forms of expression may have offered comfort to survivors. Hamburg-born Paula Padani, performed through the first Joint Distribution Committee's artistic touring program in manifold Displaced Person (DP) camps within the American occupation zone. In order to help survivors regain hope when they were held sometimes for years in DP camps, she presented her solo programs inspired by the beauty of the Near East landscape and by the ancestral traditions of Jewish life, including her dance *Horah* (sic) based on the dance brought from the Balkans and Romania to Palestine, as a new symbol of Zionist life. Paula Padani started her career as a dancer and a dance teacher only after she had arrived in Palestine following her escape from Europe. She had completed her dance studies at the Wigman School in Dresden in 1935 shortly before her exile. Her route as she fled took her from Germany to Switzerland, to Italy, and for a short time to Athens where her sister lived and where Padani gave a few dance classes. She then continued to Damascus, where an acquaintance, a professor at the *Lycée Français,* helped her to enter Palestine illegally via the town of Metullah by passing her off as his children's governess. After World War II, she returned to Europe to tour the DP camps, performing first in 1946 and again in 1948. During those tours, however, she avoided visiting her master teacher, Mary Wigman, who she knew had been involved until the last days in the choreographic life of the Third Reich.

According to Alexis Nouss, a specialist in the work of Paul Celan, the French-Romanian poet deported to a forced labor camp in Moldavia, survivors needed time to let their traumatic memories transform into a "medium of the lived". This slow acceptance would allow them to access a form of poetics having a value of creative ethics.

For several survivors educated in dance and body culture in their youth, it seems that movement preceded the writing of their testimony in their post-Holocaust life, as if it were first necessary to heal the body before finding the words to articulate their "ghost memory." Such is the case of Helena Katz Lewis who only took up the pen when she was elderly. She accomplished much before that. Following her liberation, she married a childhood friend, Harry Lewis, in Prague, moved to Ireland, had two children, and started to teach dance. In 1962, she founded the first modern dance group in Belfast, which gave a decisive impulse to the development of modern dance and choreography in Northern Ireland. The love of her family and her choreographic involvement with young generations helped her to find a path of resilience. Her book *A time to Speak*, published in 1992, attests to the remarkable maturity of a woman who has been able to look back to her past from a reconstructed and accomplished present. The vital inspiration of dance radiates at the very heart of her sober writing. Her book is at the same time that of a dancer who has been able to draw the strength from her body to go through the ordeal of the camps, and that of a survivor who found in dance the means of reinventing her life after the destruction of the *Shoah*.

The Hungarian Eva Fahidi-Pusztai also waited for decades before she felt able to write about the murder of her entire family during the massive deportation of the Hungarian Jews in the summer 1944. She herself was among the very few to be selected for forced labor on arrival in Auschwitz (rather than for the crematoria). She was sent to *Münchmühle,* in Germany, where she worked for the armaments industry. At the age of 90 in October 2015, she created *Sea Lavender – or the Euphoria of Being*, a dance and theatre performance in Budapest with the young dancer Emese Cuhorka. They have toured Europe tirelessly ever since. For Eva Fahidi-Pusztai "With gestures and movements, you can be freer than with words". Writing and dancing in her old age helped her to overcome the past, to unburden herself from the weight of hate against her tormentors and from the guilt of surviving her family: "I am alive and I love life."

For her part after the War, far from Europe, in Israel, Yehudit Arnon had come to terms with her traumatic experience by studying and teaching dance. She transmitted something from her own survivor experience many years later by creating the Kibbutz Dance Company at Kibbutz Ga'aton in 1970. Her remarkable and well-known story shows how deeply she understood the need for poetry and the exercise of freedom through dance. This understanding was directly rooted in her experience during the Holocaust. She had indeed promised herself in Auschwitz-Birkenau that she would dedicate her life to dance if she survived the humiliations and tortures of her persecutors. She kept her promise and gave her company in the Galilee an international stature by inviting European choreographers to create for its repertory. Her former student, Rami Be'er, a Sabra child born in the kibbutz to Holocaust survivors, became the artistic director of the company in 1996 and continues to transmit the ethical message of Yehudit Arnon. In 2009, he was one of the first Israeli born choreographers to create a work about the *Shoah* called *Aide M*émoire.

Through their lives shaped by the struggle to survive, their commitment to remembrance and the quest for meaning, these survivors showed how creativity was and remains a central motor for the desire to be alive. They found answers for themselves rooted in their bodily emotions, with ways to transmit their experiences to others. Their existential path intersected with the research of survivor therapists, such as the Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who put the search for meaning at the center of his method of "logothera-

py", which he conceived of as helping people to overcome grief and their most painful experiences.

Others, however, have not been able to overcome the collective trauma of the loss of their loved ones and the weight of the resulting void. This is the case of the dancer and choreographer Pola Nirenska, one of the few survivors of a large family, who, like Primo Levi, ended up committing suicide despite a resilient life. She had been trained at the Wigman school and started her stage career as a member of the Wigman group in 1930. She participated in three successive Wigman groups, the last touring America in 1932-33, Wigman's last company during the Weimar Period. Because the company disbanded, Pola Nirenska returned to her native Warsaw and taught at the Conservatory. But by 1935, observing a growing anti-Semitism during her artistic tours to Austria and Italy, she fled to England. There, she gave dance recitals and choreographed during the war for the British Army and the Home Front. Impoverished, she nonetheless reached the United States in 1949, restarted a blossoming career in dance; she also married Jan Karski, the Polish resistant fighter. Karski had reported in 1942 to the Polish government-in-exile and the Western Allies about the unfolding of the Holocaust which he had witnessed in Poland. Years later, in 1978, Karski was interviewed by the French filmmaker and writer Claude Lanzmann in preparation for his film *Shoah* (which premiered seven years later). For the interview, Karski agreed to immerse himself in his traumatic memories of the war and to describe his unsuccessful attempt to alert President Roosevelt to the plight of Jews in Europe. This interview changed his agreement with his wife that they not speak about the Holocaust either privately or publicly. This change also stimulated Pola Nirenska to delve into her memories and in 1980 she began her major dance work on the *Shoah* called *Holocaust Tetralogy*. Over a ten years period, she created several independent sections, the first called *In Memory of Those ... Who Are No More*, followed by *Whatever Begins also Ends*, *Shout* and *The Train*. But the process of remembering the loss of her family and of creating works based on the disappeared triggered depression that led during this time to hospitalizations.

Paula Padani dancing her Horah in a DP camp in the American Occupation Zone, during the first artistic tour organized in Germany by the Joint Distribution Committee in 1946. Photo courtesy of Gabrielle de Gail (private collection)

Alexis Nouss observes that the language of the surviving poets often integrated principles of division and instability, the signs of a real now, dislocated. Pola Nirenska, although spared the Holocaust by her exile, nevertheless succumbed to the black holes of the past. But she had finished her remarkable *Holocaust Tetralogy* which showed how much she faced an "ethical responsibility" similar to that one carried by the survivors of the camps and, at the same time, struggled with the desperate "helplessness" of language to face a world that had lost its unity.

4) The Constructions of Oblivion

A fourth field of reflection focuses on the question of the reception by the post-Holocaust world. The French literary theorist George Steiner meditates in *Language and Silence* about the price paid by the German language itself over the long term for its "flirtation" with Nazism. Steiner estimates that the language has been deeply ruined by its perverse uses of the Nazi ideology. So, he writes: the Nazis have degraded "the dignity of human language at the level of screaming wolves ... Words – these guardians of meaning – suffer like men. ... Some can survive, others are incurable."

Over time, German literature has been able to do justice to exiled and deported writers, such as in the critical analysis of the *Lingua Tertii Imperii* ["The Language of the Third Reich"] by the Romance language scholar Victor Klemperer, who had survived in Dresden thanks to his non-Jewish wife.

But what about the dancers who shared the monumental ambitions of Hitler and their willingness to embody his dance policy? The mistaken canonical tendencies by Western dance histography in the second half of the 20th century, its avoidance strategies to deconstruct and to analyze the relationships between dance and politics under the Third Reich, have resulted in an incapacity to face the continuities of Nazism in the European post-war choreographic networks. This resistance to reality shows the struggles to keep this Pandora's box from being opened. Until today, it leaves in a still undisputed cultural centrality, a number of celebrities who had openly supported the cultural policy and state anti-Semitism of the Third Reich.

Consequently, the resistance and resilience of exiles and survivors cannot land on the shore of a shared collective history. Historical works initiated in the 1990s by a few rare researchers who started to unearth the taboos and examine the complexity of the dance history of the Third Reich, remain isolated in the academic and artistic worlds. Thus, the fate of the disappeared German-Jewish choreographic culture of Central Europe continues silently to mourn and to shed tears from its state of oblivion.

5) Transmigrations of Dance

A fifth area of research concerns the issues of intergenerational transmissions and the unpredictable circulation of exile and the

trauma of the Holocaust. The visual arts attest to the importance of this phenomenon among subsequent generations. In the choreographic milieu these concerns arose, too, but in a more scattered way. Here the need started among young Jewish and non-Jewish artists to follow in the footsteps of the erased names in the history of Central European dance, such as the exiles who survived including Gertrud Bodenwieser, Julia Marcus, Renate Schottelius, Paula Padani, and many others.

Almost by chance, Oxana Chi, a contemporary dancer with multicultural roots, discovered Tatjana Babakoff's story in Berlin through photographs. She sought to tell Barbakoff's story through an explorative round-trip between today and yesterday, making a choreography and a film in which she intertwined Barbakoff's trajectory in the interwar period with Chi's own artistic path in the 21th century. By this means, in looking at the way Tatjana Barbakoff reconciled survival and creativity in her own life, Oxana Chi looked for her own answers to the issues of the present world.

Another contemporary dancer touched by German *Ausdruckstanz* (expressive dance) is Thomas Kampe who studied dance with Hilde Holger in London, and continues to transmit her vision of creative democratic bodies. Originally a Viennese avant-garde choreographer, Hilde Holger escaped in 1939 to India, saving herself from the fate of a major part of her family lost in the Holocaust. She married a Parsi doctor in Bombay, and opened a multicultural dance school for Indian, Parsi and Jewish pupils. In 1947, fleeing the partition of India and Pakistan, she settled with her family in London, where she taught and choreographed intensively in her own studio for the rest of her life. (See "Hilde Holger: Legacy of an Expressionist, Emigrant, Innovator" by Jacqueline Waltz elsewhere in this collection). Thomas Kampe, referring himself to Adorno's ethical position in his essay on *Education after Auschwitz*, created many collective dance projects inspired by Hilde Holger. He explored the notion of self-examination and empathy, and is searching for new paths of awareness in the education of a non-authoritarian body.

These initiatives of the Jewish and non-Jewish generation of "post-memory" manifest themselves like so many breakthroughs on the silences of collective memory. Because they look for answers to the present, they feel the need to scrutinize the past. And because they listen to the way history leaves its marks on body consciousness and on the material of dance movement, they are able to pose questions to the contemporary world. They have understood in a sensitive way how much the Holocaust history is henceforth part of universal consciousness. They feel the need to position themselves in the world in relation to what has become an essential reference.

The After-lives of Fireflies

Cartography could play a helpful role in highlighting the schismatic movements provoked by the Third Reich in contemporary societies. Like an earthquake, the gulfs, holes and fractures it has caused have transformed irreversibly the world landscape, and also the artistic world. While avoiding the danger of essentialism, one would be tempted to visualize in the long term the synchronic and diachronic effects of the Nazi body politic on the interwar avant-garde dancers.

If one takes a macro-perspective, one observes that since 1933 there is a gradual transformation into a kind of double helix, simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal. On the one hand, there is the image of the multiform dynamics of an exiled dance linking itself to world cultures and on the other hand, there is another image of pro-Nazi artists which is closed off by its own taboos. But, at the same time, if one tries somehow to situate a space corresponding to the German-Jewish Central European dance, one observes instead an irreversible phenomenon of disappearance. Like an Atlantis, this unique artistic culture has been immersed, progressively silenced.

However, in this long "space-time", if one places oneself in a micro-perspective, one distinguishes a few glimmers kindled by those who resisted the destructive rays of Nazism and embodied the desire for life despite the inhuman condition they experienced. In his essay, *Survival of the Firelfies*, Georges Didi-Huberman, looks for those vulnerable parcels of humanity preserved despite the sinking of humanism described since the beginning of the 20th century by the thinkers of modernity (Walter Benjamin among others). For Didi-Huberman, those "fireflies", comparable to small dancing lights and able to survive in dark times, continue today to be the symbol of those who, at every period, try to escape all kinds of dictatorships and seek to keep the universal dimension in being human.

With this perspective, like the little *Broučci*, the dances that have been embodied by inmates in camps, are also the symbols of those fireflies. They give an insight into the intrinsic freedom and irreducible humanity of their interpreters. Just as there has been a literature, a music, a painting and a theatre of the camps, there has also been a dance of survival in the camps. As I have shown here, despite the oblivion of this phenomena in the historiography of the period, the latter will nevertheless continue to send us its light coming from the depths of life. And it will continue over time to radiate at the center of our embodied consciousness and question the ways of how we write history.

With special thanks to Judith Brin Ingber and Mark Carroll.

Notes

[1] Léon Blum himself spent the war as a Vichy political prisoner in the Pyrénées, before being deported to Buchenwald as a "prominent war prisoner" of the Nazis. He did survive the war.

[2] Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *René Blum and The Ballets Russes: In Search of a Lost Life*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

[3] Gert H. Wollheim shared his studio in Düsseldorf with Otto Dix. Later, in France from 1939 to 1942, he was detained as an "enemy alien" in camps at Vierzon, Ruchard, Gurs and Septfonds. He was able to escape and to hide with Tatjana Barbakoff in the village of Nay, in the Pyrénées. After the war, in 1947, he emigrated to New York.

[4] Klara Drenker-Nagels, Hildegard Reinhardt, Günter Goebbels, Anja Hellhammer, eds., *Tatjana Barbakoff. Tänzerin und Muse*, Bonn: Verein August Macke Haus Bonn, 2002. Günter Goebbels, *Tatjana Barbakoff. Eine vergesene Tänzerin in Bildern und Dokumenten*, Düsseldorf: Kulturbahnhof Eller eV, 2009. Patrizia Veroli, "Tatjana Barbakoff," in *Jewish Women's Encyclopedia*, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/barbakoff-tatjana (accessed June 28, 2019).

[5] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1960. The posthumous debates about Bettelheim's controversial psychological theories and practices concern his work on autism and not his research on survival.

[6] Judith Brin Ingber has published the first surveys: "Vilified or Glorified? Nazi Versus Zionist Views of the Jewish Body," Judith Brin Ingber, ed., *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011; "Dancing Despite the Scourge: Jewish Dancers During the Holocaust" presented at the Association of Jewish Studies annual conference, Washington, D.C., 2005.

[7] Kobi Kabalek, "Memory and Periphery: An Introduction," Reut Reina Bendrihem, Kobi Kabalek, Mori Ram, eds., *Hagar, Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities*, Special Issue "Memory and Periphery," Volume 12, Winter 2014.

[8] Only a few survivors' paths have been chosen for this article.

[9] Isaia Eiger, Sky Tinged Red: *A Chronicle of Two and a Half Years in Auschwitz*, Edina: Beaver's Bond Press, 2014, 252.

[10] The cast of the official cabaret troupe of Westerbork was never stable due to deportations of the prisoner-performers to Auschwitz.

[11] For an analysis of the official dance policy and those behind it, see the following publications: Marion Kant, *Tanz unterm Hakenkreuz: eine Dokumentation*, Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1996, [*Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*], New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003, 2004. Laure Guilbert, *Danser avec le Troisième Reich. Les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme*, [*Dancing with the Third Reich. Modern Dancers under Nazism*]. Brussels: Editions Complexe, 2000 (ed., André Versaille Editeur, 2011). Susan Manning, "Modern Dance in the Third Reich," in Rebekah J. Kowal, Gerald Siegmund, Randy Martin, eds., *Oxford Handbook on Dance and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017; Mark Franco, "*Serge Lifar et la question de la collaboration avec les autorités allemandes sous l'Occupation*" ["Serge Lifar and the Question of Collaborating with the German Authorities during The Occupation"], in *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoir*e, 2016, no.132.

[12] Helen Lewis, *A Time to Speak*, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1994. (Paul Hermann, her first husband, died on a forced march in 1945; she remarried after the war and took her new husband's name, Lewis).

[13] Judith Brin Ingber: "Dancing Despite the Scourge: Jewish Dancers during the Holocaust," paper delivered at the Association of Jewish Studies, annual conference, Washington, D.C., 2005.

[14] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Survivance des lucioles*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2009, (University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

[15] Aleksander Kulisiewicz composed the song *"Moja Brama"* (My Gate) after his liberation in memory of what he describes as an indelible experience of his life in the camps.

[16] Krystina Zywulska, *I Survived Auschwitz*, Warsaw: tCHu, 2004. Judith Brin Ingber, "If I Survive: Yehudit Arnon's Story", in Naomi Jackson, Toni Shapiro-Phim, eds., *Dance, Human Rights and Social Justice; Dignity in Motion*, Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2008.

[17] Eva Fahidi-Pusztai, *Die Seele der Dinge*, Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2011.

[18] *Brouci*, based on the popular 19th century children's book by that name by Jan Karafia was adapted for the stage by 4 imprisoned artists in Theresienstadt. It was conceived and choreographed by Kamila Rosenbaumova; the music was composed by the cabaret musician Karel Švenk based on Czech folk songs taught to the children; the costumes and sets were designed by the Bauhaus trained artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis; and it was directed by Nava Shean. *Brouci* was performed over 30 times by children in an attic theatre from 1943 through 1945. *Brundibar* had been re-orchestrated in 1943 in Theresienstadt by its composer Hans Krása (who took the sets with him from Prague into the ghetto), and staged by the architect and set designer František Zelenka. The Nazis used the representations of *Brundibar* for their propaganda film on Theresienstadt. Most of the children and artists of both productions had been sent to Auschwitz and murdered (though Hans Krása, Nava Shean and Kamila Rosenbaumova survived).

[19] Emanuel Levinas, *Ethique et inifni. Dialogues d'Emmanuel Levinas et Philippe Nemo*, Paris: Fayard, 1982.

[20] Aaron Appelfeld, *The Story of A Life: A Memoir*, New York, London: Penguin, 2006.

[21] Primo Levi, *Se questo e un uomo*, Turin: F. de Silva, 1947.

[22] Interviews by the author with Paula Padani in Paris in the 1990s. For a more detailed biography of Padani by Laure Guilbert, see the online *Jewish Women's Encyclopedia*, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/padani-paula (accessed June 28, 2019).

[23] Alexis Nouss, *Paul Celan, les lieux d'un déplacement*, Lormont: Editions Le Bord De L'Eau, 2011.

[24] Interview by the author with Yehudit Arnon in October 1993 at the kibbutz Ga'aton. The complexe story of Yehudit Arnon's deportation in different camps of the occupied Poland and her traumatic memory of this time will be detailed by Yonat Rotman in her future book: *The Seed and the Shell - The Story of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company*, Haifa: Yad Yaari, December 2019.

[25] Dancer Rima Faber has been heir to much of the artistic legacy of Pola Nirenska. See her essay "Ghosts of the Past: The Creation of Pola Nirenska's *Holocaust Tetralogy*" elsewhere in this collection.

[26] Georges Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*, New York: Atheneum, 1967.

[27] Viktor Klemperer, *LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii*, Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1947.

[28] Oxana Chi, *Durch Gärten tanzen/ Dancing through Gardens*, Berlin: Li: Chi Movie, 2014 (DVD).

[29] Thomas Kampe, "Moving after Auschwitz: The Feldenkrais Method as a Soma-critique," paper delivered at the Korean Society for Dance Documentation, October 2013, conference proceedings in www.academia.edu.

Laure Guilbert is a French historian and editor. She holds a Ph.D. from the European University Institute of Florence and is the author of *Danser avec le IIIe Reich. Les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 2000, André Versaille Editeur, 2011). From 2002 to 2018, she has been Chief Editor for dance books of the Paris National Opera. She has also taught regularly in performing arts departments at the university level in Germany and France and has co-founded the Association des Chercheurs en Danse (aCD), as well as the online journal *Recherches en Danse*. She is researching exile of the German speaking choreographic world under Nazism. She has traveled extensively for this research in Europe, Australia and the United States. lguilbert@hotmail.com